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Actions taken in organizing the activities of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 59/228, in which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixtieth session a report on the activities planned by the Secretary-General and relevant organizations of the United Nations system for the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015. The Assembly also recalled its resolution 55/196, by which it had proclaimed 2003 the International Year of Freshwater, and its resolution 58/217, by which it had proclaimed 2005-2015 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", to commence on 22 March 2005. The latter resolution stated the goals of the Decade and called upon the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds to make 2005-2015 a decade of action. The report outlines the activities that were prepared for the launch of the Decade on 22 March 2005, some concrete initial actions for the Decade at the regional level, proposals for a public information strategy and a communications plan for awareness-raising, and provides some recommendations for action to be taken during the course of the Decade.

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** The present report was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UN-Water, the inter-agency mechanism designated by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, through its High-level Committee on Programmes, as the coordinating mechanism in the United Nations system for follow-up action in the area of water resources and sanitation.

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Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–6	3
II.	Background	7–8	4
III.	Intergovernmental processes at the onset of the "Water for Life" Decade	9–11	4
IV.	United Nations system programmes and activities	12–32	5
V.	Regional initiatives	33–46	9
VI.	Assistance to country programmes	47–57	12
VII.	Communications strategy	58–71	14
VIII.	Partnership initiatives	72–85	16
IX.	Conclusions and recommendations	86–92	20

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 58/217, the General Assembly proclaimed 2005-2015 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", to commence on 22 March 2005, and recalled its resolution 55/196, in which it had proclaimed 2003 the International Year of Freshwater.

2. In its resolution 59/228, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixtieth session a report on the activities that he and relevant organizations of the United Nations system planned for the Decade. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

3. In its resolution 58/217, the Assembly decided that the goals of the Decade should be to have a greater focus on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, while striving to ensure the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts, and the furtherance of cooperation at all levels in order to help to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals. It also called upon the relevant United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, regional commissions and other organizations of the United Nations system to deliver a coordinated response, utilizing existing resources and voluntary funds to make 2005-2015 a decade of action.

4. The Millennium Declaration commits Governments around the world to a clear agenda for combating poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, discrimination against women and environmental degradation. In the area of water resources and sanitation, heads of State pledged in 2000 to reduce by half the proportion of people who are unable to reach, or to afford, safe drinking water by 2015 and to stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources. Additional goals adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, are aimed at developing integrated water resource management and water efficiency plans by 2005 and at halving the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation by 2015. The primary goal of the "Water for Life" Decade is to promote efforts to fulfil international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015 — to be a decade of action. This will be the second international decade on water-related issues organized by the United Nations, succeeding the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, 1981-1990.

5. UN-Water, the United Nations system-wide mechanism for coherence and coordination for the relevant agencies and programmes involved with water-related issues, was established by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) through its High-level Committee on Programmes in 2004. UN-Water is coordinating activities of the United Nations for implementing the Decade, including with non-United Nations partners. At the national level, it is expected that each country will take its own approach to organizing activities around the "Water for Life" Decade through, for example, national committees.

6. The present report provides information on the institutional framework for preparations for the Decade and gives details on some of the international, regional and national activities that are being planned and that could be carried out in connection with it.

II. Background

7. Awareness of the importance of the use and management of freshwater resources for achieving sustainable development has increased dramatically in recent years, as a result of a number of ongoing international and national initiatives and activities, leading to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. This recognition put water and sanitation high on the agenda at Johannesburg. The International Year of Freshwater, 2003, was well timed to follow up on recommendations for action on water and sanitation made at the Johannesburg Summit. The major United Nations activities for the Year were jointly coordinated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This example of excellent inter-agency collaboration drew in many other members of UN-Water, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which was the lead agency in organizing the World Day for Water, 22 March 2003, under the theme "Water for the future". UNEP developed a programme designed to help Governments and key partners to plan events to raise awareness of the need to preserve the quality and quantity of freshwater for future generations. Educational materials and national events throughout the International Year were featured on the official website (www.wateryear2003.org), and can be used during the Decade.

8. During the "Water for Life" Decade, special emphasis will be placed on ensuring the participation and involvement of women in water-related development efforts, as called for in the resolution. The challenge of the Decade is to focus attention on action-oriented activities and policies that ensure the long-term sustainable management of water resources, in terms of both quantity and quality, and include measures to improve sanitation. Achieving the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade will require sustained commitment, cooperation and investment on the part of all stakeholders from 2005 to 2015 and far beyond.

III. Intergovernmental processes at the onset of the "Water for Life" Decade

9. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 58/217, the General Assembly decided that the goals of the Decade should support the achievement of "internationally agreed water-related goals contained in Agenda 21, the Programme for the further Implementation of Agenda 21, the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and, as appropriate, those identified [by] the Commission on Sustainable Development".

10. At the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held in 2003, the special themes selected for the first implementation cycle following the World Summit on Sustainable Development were water resources, sanitation and human settlements. The twelfth session, in 2004, provided an exhaustive review of the current state of implementation of policies and practices to meet the internationally agreed goals in water and sanitation.

11. At its thirteenth session, in 2005, the Commission on Sustainable Development explored policy options for furthering implementation on the issues of water and sanitation, as well as on human settlements. The final decision (see E/2005/29) provides a possible framework for Governments and the United Nations system,

working in partnership with major groups and other stakeholders, to take action in the areas of water and sanitation. Options are presented on access to basic water services; integrated water resources management; access to basic sanitation; sanitation and hygiene education; and wastewater collection, treatment and reuse. The decision provides a range of measures and approaches to address water, sanitation and human settlements in an integrated manner, taking into account economic, social and environmental aspects, related sectoral policies and cross-cutting issues as identified at the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. A user-friendly matrix was developed in this process to highlight policy options, possible actions and case studies. It is available at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/matrix.pdf. Both the decision and the matrix could be used as guidelines for action during the "Water for Life" Decade.

IV. United Nations system programmes and activities

A. UN-Water[1]

12. UN-Water is coordinating activities for the "Water for Life" Decade, 2005-2015. The terms of reference and modalities of work for UN-Water cover the elements of a detailed inter-agency plan for addressing water as well as sanitation issues, and include mechanisms for interacting with non-United Nations system stakeholders. The chairmanship of UN-Water rotates among its members and is currently held by the World Health Organization (WHO), while the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides secretariat services. Information on UN-Water can be found at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/inter_agency/inter_agency.htm.

13. UN-Water has defined a number of thematic initiatives for its work over the Decade, which include coping with water scarcity and pollution; sanitation, safe drinking water and health; gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation; integrated water resources management; transboundary water issues; and disaster risk reduction. Africa was selected as a geographical focus due to its exceptional needs in water and sanitation. A series of policy briefs is planned for wide distribution by UN-Water during the Decade, to reflect UN-Water's thematic initiatives. An initial prototype on water hazard risks has been produced, and a second on gender, water and sanitation is available on the website.

14. One of the main ongoing subprogrammes of UN-Water is the World Water Assessment Programme, an inter-agency initiative hosted by UNESCO, which provides the background assessment for and produces the *World Water Development Report*. The first edition of the report, *Water for People, Water for Life*, was launched at the Third World Water Forum, in Kyoto, Japan, on 22 March 2003 (see www.world.water-forum3.com/), and the second edition will be launched at the Fourth World Water Forum, in Mexico City, on 22 March 2006. The World Water Assessment Programme provides comprehensive information and analysis on the current state of the world's water resources and potential policy solutions, bringing together relevant inputs from Governments, NGOs, academic institutions and the private sector. Information on participation in the Programme is available at http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/index.shtml.

15. A number of activities coordinated under UN-Water have cross-linkages with another water-oriented coordinating mechanism, UN-Oceans, which was also set up under CEB to strengthen the coordination and cooperation of United Nations activities related to oceans and coastal areas. The cross-linkages between UN-Water and UN-Oceans are most relevant for integrative mechanisms, such as the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, and for small island developing States (see http://www.un-oceans.org).

B. Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation

16. The Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation was established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in order to give advice, galvanize global action and raise awareness on water and sanitation issues, to help mobilize funds for water and sanitation projects and to encourage new partnerships, as part of international efforts to eradicate poverty and to achieve the agreed development goals in water and sanitation.

17. The Advisory Board, chaired by former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto of Japan, includes a wide range of eminent persons, technical experts, stakeholders from civil society and other knowledgeable individuals with experience in inspiring people, moving the machinery of government and working with the media, the private sector and civil society. After its second meeting, in Tokyo in December 2004, the Board issued statements on two key issues — integrated water resources management and water disaster risk management — which provided content for the international debate at the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction (January 2005) and the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (April 2005). The Board is expected to provide important inputs to the Fourth World Water Forum, in Mexico City in March 2006.

C. United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water

18. In early 2003, the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality established the Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development as task manager. UN-Water also supported the creation of the Task Force, thus linking gender focal points and water focal points in each agency. Currently the Task Force comprises 18 United Nations programmes and agencies, 5 non-United Nations entities and 2 observers. The Task Force reports annually to the Inter-agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and semi-annually to UN-Water. In late 2004, UN-Water agreed that the Task Force would be one of its subprogrammes and requested it to take responsibility for the gender component of the "Water for Life" Decade, 2005-2015. The Task Force has prepared a programme of work for 2005-2006 and a policy brief for UN-Water.

19. The Task Force submitted its paper "A gender perspective on water and sanitation" (see http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/documents/bground_2.pdf) to the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April 2005. The paper provided content for much of the discussion on the cross-cutting issue of gender in water and sanitation.

D. Joint Monitoring Programme on water supply and sanitation

20. WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) actively contribute to global water supply and sanitation monitoring and information dissemination through the Joint Monitoring Programme under the umbrella of UN-Water. Coverage figures produced by the Joint Monitoring Programme are the official reference data for the United Nations system, including with regard to the goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

21. In the 2004 report, "Meeting the MDG drinking water and sanitation target: a mid-term assessment of progress", the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme presented coverage data for most countries of the world as of 2002 (see www.wssinfo.org). The figures revealed the glaring contrasts between rich and poor nations and between rural and urban populations in the poorest countries. The focus of its most recent report, "Water for life: making it happen" (June 2005), is on the impact of lack of drinking water and sanitation on different age groups and the changes that simple improvements in water and sanitation services can make on people's lifestyles, health and economic prospects.

22. For its coverage estimates, the Joint Monitoring Programme uses nationally representative household surveys such as the Demographic and Health Survey, the UNICEF multiple indicator cluster surveys and the WHO global health survey, as well as other reliable country surveys and national censuses that allow data to be compared. The current database provides country, global and regional coverage estimates, disaggregated by service type and by urban and rural areas, for 1990 and 2002. The 2006 report will update coverage estimates to 2004 as a baseline for the "Water for Life" Decade.

E. Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities and associated programmes

23. To address the fact that nearly 80 per cent of the pollution in the oceans originates from land-based sources, the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities was adopted in 1995. The Programme of Action is the global mechanism aimed at addressing the linkages between freshwater and the coastal and marine environment and the significant impacts on human health, poverty alleviation and food security from the continued degradation of the coastal and marine environment.

24. UNEP provides the secretariat for the Global Programme of Action Coordination Office, located in The Hague, which is developing national programmes of action for the implementation of the Global Programme of Action in some 40 countries. Working closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other implementing United Nations agencies, the Global Programme of Action can assist countries in building national capacity in these areas during the "Water for Life" Decade. Direct support is provided to local and national training programmes on, for example, municipal wastewater management, which will be continued and intensified during the Decade. UNEP is also planning to convene the second intergovernmental review of the Global Programme of Action

in China in October 2006, thus contributing significantly to implementation of the goals and targets associated with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

25. As part of its efforts during the "Water for Life" Decade, UNEP will also strengthen the UNEP Global Environmental Monitoring System on Water as a global repository for water-quality data.

26. The UNEP Regional Seas Programme, covering 17 regions around the world and more than 140 coastal States and territories, provides a framework for regional agreements and conventions and their related action plans to protect the coastal and marine environment. These cover such issues as chemical wastes and integrated approaches to the management of coastal areas and the conservation and management of marine resources and ecosystems. A new brochure examines the widespread occurrence of marine litter in areas under the Regional Seas Programme and within the 64 large marine ecosystems around the world, so as to promote integrated management based on ecosystem approaches.

F. International Hydrological Programme

27. Of relevance for the "Water for Life" Decade is the International Hydrological Programme, which is the UNESCO intergovernmental scientific cooperative programme for water resources. The International Hydrological Programme aims to improve the scientific and technological basis for the rational management of water resources, including the protection of the environment. As the principal UNESCO mechanism for contributing to the priority issue of water resources and related ecosystems, the International Hydrological Programme strives to minimize risks to water resources systems, taking fully into account social challenges and interactions and developing appropriate approaches for sound water management (see http://www.unesco.org/water/ihp/index.shtml).

G. Water for African and Asian cities

28. In its resolution 57/275 of December 2002, the General Assembly called upon the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to further support the implementation of the Water for African Cities Programme, as requested by the New Partnership for Africa's Development. In April 2005, the UN-Habitat Governing Council supported further actions in the field of urban drinking water and sanitation and invited Governments and international financial institutions to increase their support for the water and sanitation activities of UN-Habitat. Thus, UN-Habitat has established strategic partnerships with the World Bank and the regional development banks to promote pro-poor investments in human settlements related to water and sanitation. These partnerships are expected to lead to significant new investments through the Water for African Cities Programme and the Water for Asian Cities Programme.

29. In strengthening its work in the field of water and sanitation, UN-Habitat has moved towards a programmatic approach that allows donors to contribute funds to a facility dedicated to a well-defined goal with a clear set of objectives, the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund. For this facility, priority is given to Africa, which has the poorest water and sanitation coverage of all regions, and to initiatives that could

reduce the difficulties faced by women and children in having access to safe water and adequate sanitation.

30. In the Water for Asian Cities Programme, the UN-Habitat partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is expected to bring in $500 million in investment in five Asian cities. The Programme was officially launched by ADB and UN-Habitat at the Third World Water Forum, in March 2003 in Japan. This partnership initiative entails capacity-building grant support of $10 million (provided by the Government of the Netherlands and ADB) and follow-up loans of $500 million to Asian cities over a period of five years (2003-2007).

31. In the Water for African Cities Programme, a similar partnership with ADB is expected to assist with follow-up investments of about $360 million. Moreover, with support from the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund, in consultation with host Governments, UN-Habitat has initiated the Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative to address the rehabilitation needs of water and sanitation infrastructure in the secondary towns around the lake.

H. United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

32. The aim of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction is to mobilize Governments, United Nations agencies, regional bodies, the private sector and civil society to unite efforts in building resilient societies by developing a culture of prevention and preparedness. The "Water for Life" Decade has the same time frame as the Hyogo Framework for Action: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, January 2005). This synergy provides a unique opportunity to strengthen understanding of how the management of risk related to disasters should be linked to water resources management.

V. Regional initiatives

33. UN-Water, which includes the secretariats of all five United Nations regional commissions as members, encourages regional inter-agency networking arrangements between the regional economic commissions and regional offices of the various United Nations agencies. The first regional UN-Water initiative is being established by the Economic Commission for Africa, which is developing a work plan of activities for UN-Water/Africa; this provides a good model for the work of UN-Water work in other regions.

A. Economic Commission for Africa

34. Africa's share of global freshwater resources, 10 per cent, closely matches its share of world population, 12 per cent, but the distribution of this resource is uneven, from areas of severe aridity, such as the Sahara and Sahel in the north and the Kalahari in the south, to areas of abundant water resources, such as the Congo Basin, which is estimated to have 50 per cent of Africa's freshwater. The continent suffers from one of the most unstable rainfall regimes in the world. The extremes of shortage and excess of water result in different forms of socio-economic insecurity.

35. In the field of water policy, strategy and institutional arrangements, a number of advances have been made in African countries. There is an increasing commitment to water policy reform and a strong trend towards decentralization of water institutions. The main goal of UN-Water/Africa is to ensure coherence and foster joint action by all United Nations agencies active in the water sector in Africa, particularly during the "Water for Life" Decade. The main activities on UN-Water/Africa's work programme are:

(a) *Advocacy for raising the profile of water issues targeted towards policy makers*. UN-Water/Africa organized the Pan African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water under the auspices of the African Ministers' Council on Water in December 2003, which defined Africa's priority implementation needs and required actions. The major outcomes formed the basis of the work programme of many African countries in water and sanitation. Policy priority has been given to the role of gender in water resources management in Africa, based on an action plan developed and approved by the Executive Committee of the African Ministers' Council on Water in June 2005. Detailed information is available at www.uneca.org/awich;

(b) *Monitoring of progress in implementing regional and global programmes*. UN-Water/Africa has initiated a biannual African Water Development Report, based on reports at the basin, national and subregional levels. A final version of the report, covering 30 countries, is scheduled for release in September 2005;

(c) *Improving access to information on African water resources*. The UN-Water/Africa group has set up the African Water Information Clearing House, a continent-wide information system backed up by subregional networks of water and geo-information specialists and institutions.

36. With Africa designated as the geographic focus of UN-Water, the activities described above are expected to make a significant contribution to improving the development and utilization of Africa's water resources for socio-economic development, and thus to progress in reaching the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade.

B. Economic Commission for Europe

37. Integrated water resources management in the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, with more than 150 major transboundary rivers, over 100 transboundary groundwater aquifers and about 30 international lakes, requires joint actions among the countries that share basins, including the establishment of joint bodies, such as river commissions. In February 2005, the sixtieth annual session of ECE agreed on a framework for policies, strategies and action on water and sanitation that covers the period until 2015. The policies and actions that form the ECE response to the challenges of the Decade are based on its 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its two Protocols, on water and health and on civil liability for damage caused by industrial accidents. These regional legal instruments set goals and tasks for countries and institutions that are responsible for integrated water resources management in a transboundary context. The provisions of the European Union

Water Framework Directive and some 150 bilateral and multilateral agreements supplement these instruments.

38. The contributions of ECE to the Decade include research and capacity-building support in such technical areas as flood management, protection of water-related ecosystems, groundwater management and monitoring and assessment of transboundary waters. Selected programme elements, most of them carried out in cooperation with UNESCO, UNDP, UNEP, the World Meteorological Organization, WHO, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and others, became part of the work plan of UN-Water.

C. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

39. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) conducts research and disseminates information on the economic and institutional aspects of water resources management in Latin America and the Caribbean. It also provides advice on water legislation and regulation of water utilities and cooperates with a number of global and regional projects, such as the Global Water Partnership and Visión Andina, assessing the impact of trade and investment agreements on water and water utilities.

40. ECLAC publishes the newsletter of the Network for Cooperation in Integrated Water Resource Management for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean twice a year, in English and Spanish. Organizations involved in the technical network include private and public water resources management institutions. The Network's purpose is to improve the capacity for multiple-use management of water resources in diverse dimensions (institutional, administrative, economic-financial, legal and technical), through exchange of information and direct cooperation between Network members. More information on the Network and the ECLAC work programme and publications on water resources can be found at http://www.eclac.cl/drni/.

D. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

41. The Asia and the Pacific region accounts for more than two thirds of the world's population and, on average, over 80 per cent of deaths caused by natural disasters annually. As part of its activities related to the "Water for Life" Decade, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) initiated two major programmes in 2004 and 2005: (a) the application of strategic planning and management to assist developing countries in the preparation of integrated water resources management plans, with emphasis on eradicating poverty and meeting the goals of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and (b) integrating disaster risk management into water resources management.

42. The programme on integrated water resources management builds on the results of case studies in 17 developing countries which applied the guidelines on strategic planning and management of water resources, developed earlier by ESCAP. The case studies were carried out in 2003 and 2004 as part of a regional project funded through the Development Account. This programme supports the implementation of the integrated water resources management component of the

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation within the framework of the "Water for Life" Decade.

43. The programme on water-related disaster risk management links the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (Kobe, Japan, January 2005), to the "Water for Life" Decade. The programme builds on existing ESCAP subregional networks on hydrology, meteorology and disaster risk management, especially the Typhoon Committee and the Panel on Tropical Cyclones. The integration of disaster risk management into the management of water resources includes improvements in multi-hazard mapping and warning systems and the enhancement of disaster preparedness at the local, national and regional levels, as well as the promotion of community-based disaster risk management practices. The region's developed and developing countries are learning from one another's experience — for example, through the annual hydrological workshops of the Typhoon Committee.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

44. The Western Asia region has always experienced a low level of natural water availability, especially in arid or extremely arid climatic zones. Rapid population growth, unsustainable water use and increasing pollution levels further contribute to water scarcity problems in the region. Moreover, most water resources used in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region, both surface water and groundwater, are shared by several riparian countries.

45. To address these challenges, ESCWA initiated several activities in 2004 and 2005 as part of preparations for the "Water for Life" Decade, mainly in building capacity for shared water resources management and integrated water resources management. A training manual for the region was prepared, addressing the integration of water policies, institutional and legislative tools and the administrative methods required for integrated water resources management.

46. On the issue of shared water resources, several pilot areas (relating to surface water and groundwater resources) were studied to serve as models for reaching agreements on sharing resources and promoting joint technical and managerial cooperation among the riparian countries. A series of workshops was held to assist member countries in enhancing their negotiation capacity and skills and promoting conflict resolution in the region. ESCWA also focused on the sustainable management of shared groundwater resources, especially in the many countries where groundwater is the main source of water. Emphasis has been placed on integrating specific policies for groundwater management into policies at the basin level.

VI. Assistance to country programmes

47. The coherence of United Nations-system actions at the country level is crucial to achieving the overall objectives of the "Water for Life" Decade. UN-Water is encouraging exchanges of information and dialogue on policy-making on water and sanitation issues within the United Nations system and with external partners and stakeholders. Such cooperation is essential in efforts to incorporate the water agenda

in country-level exercises and processes such as the Common Country Assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.

48. As part of the actions taken for the "Water for Life" Decade, UNDP and the World Bank have undertaken a joint initiative to identify a few key areas in the water and sanitation sector where UNDP and the World Bank would benefit from closer collaboration. The focus of the work is on the need to support countries in scaling up their efforts to reach the water and sanitation targets.

49. The UNDP Water Governance Programme and the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Programme are working together to develop rural and urban initiatives in water supply and sanitation. Both programmes can influence large-scale investments to focus more on poverty-reduction targets and encourage the participation of local-level stakeholders in decision-making processes to ensure more equitable distribution of investment benefits. Both programmes promote governance (policy, legal, regulatory and institutional reform) and build capacities at the national and local levels, and both provide similar structures for service delivery, including regional and country offices.

50. UNDP places poverty eradication at the centre of its work on water supply, sanitation and human settlements, with an overall investment of over $400 million in grants. Through this work, UNDP, with a variety of partners, has produced replicable results in providing access to affordable drinking water and sanitation to the poor in peri-urban and rural areas. The Water Governance Programme focuses on addressing local capacity constraints in order to improve access to water and sanitation and operates at the local and national levels.

51. At the local level, UNDP supports the local management of water resources and delivery of water supply and sanitation services by providing grants for community action, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme and Local Initiatives for the Environment. Gender mainstreaming is emphasized in decision-making and project implementation at the household, community and national levels. The gender focus in water management programmes leads to improvements in effectiveness, sustainability, health and equality. The programme is having positive impacts on the ground through three key water and sanitation initiatives: the Community Water Initiative, ecological sanitation programmes and the international network for capacity-building in integrated water resources management (Cap-Net), the UNDP flagship programme for capacity-building.

52. At the national level, UNDP facilitates communication and coordination among the multiple actors dealing with water resources. UNDP and its partners have been facilitating country-level action for the preparation of plans for integrated water resources management and for promoting the participation of multiple stakeholders in the implementation of water resources management practices.

53. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs provides policy advice at the national level, particularly through its technical advisory services to developing countries, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, for strengthening institutional capacity to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans, encouraging the participation of all stakeholders.

54. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has developed training materials for users at all levels to promote better use of water in agriculture as part of its activities for the "Water for Life" Decade. Areas covered include educational approaches aimed at farmers and farm communities; technical materials for irrigation professionals; irrigation scheme management training courses; and policy advice in agricultural water management. In addition, FAO is promoting more sustainable agricultural practices with a view to reducing negative environmental impacts and water pollution, through its integrated plant-nutrient and pest-management programmes. These practices are applied in member countries through technical assistance and South-South cooperation programmes and projects.

55. UNICEF continues to expand its water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, supporting activities in 93 countries in 2004, ranging from national policy development to direct support for improved service delivery in focus areas. UNICEF interventions focus on expanding programmes that promote improved hygiene and sanitation, while maintaining support for improved water-supply services.

56. UNICEF supported water, sanitation and hygiene education programmes for schools in 76 countries in 2004 and plans to expand the programme during the "Water for Life" Decade. Components include hygiene education and teacher education in hygiene in primary schools; construction of new water and sanitation facilities in schools; developing and promoting child- and girl-friendly facility designs; and promoting hygienic behaviour change in communities.

57. WHO, working with its partners, is developing a suite of tools to assist countries in assessing the health impacts of water and sanitation and to assess the costs and impacts (both health and non-health) of policy and technical alternatives to support and inform intersectoral policy dialogue. The tools will be launched during the first year of the Decade and progressively updated and expanded as the Decade progresses.

VII. Communications strategy

58. The "Water for Life" Decade draws on much of the work initiated during the International Year of Freshwater, 2003, and provides an opportunity to maintain momentum on freshwater issues. In this regard, strategic communications and coordination are crucial for the coherence and success of such efforts.

59. To support the launch of the Decade in March 2005, key messages were drafted by UN-Water in conjunction with the Department of Public Information and circulated for discussion at a meeting of the United Nations Communications Group, which is composed of communications focal points within all United Nations agencies. Materials that were developed to support the initial launch of the Decade include a logo, a website and educational and audio-visual materials. The Department of Public Information is assisting UN-Water in drafting a communications strategy with important dates, key messages, expected publications and key meetings planned throughout the Decade.

A. Logo

60. The logo for the International "Water for Life" Decade, 2005-2015, was chosen by UN-Water from several designs submitted by the Department of Public Information and an independent designer working on a pro bono basis. The logo chosen, submitted by the independent designer, is shown here.

61. The design was submitted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to the Publications Board of the Department of Public Information in January 2005. The decision on the logo was approved by consensus through e-mail correspondence among the members of the Logo Approval Committee. The logo is intended to be used by UN-Water members and other United Nations entities on all United Nations publications and promotional materials pertaining to the Decade and can also be used by outside parties who seek permission through the online interactive form.

B. Website

62. The official website for the "Water for Life" Decade was launched on 22 March 2005 (www.un.org/waterforlifedecade.org). Work is currently under way to make the site available in all official United Nations languages. The website will be housed and maintained at United Nations Headquarters, jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Department of Public Information. Links to all the other UN-Water member organizations are included. The website will be used as an awareness-raising tool and a clearing house to present activities taking place at the international, regional and national levels.

C. Promotional and educational materials and publications

63. The Department of Public Information and UN-Water produced a promotional booklet for the Decade which includes images, facts, figures and recommendations for action on a number of water-related themes. The booklet is currently available in English and French.

64. WHO, on behalf of UN-Water, prepared an advocacy sourcebook for the "Water for Life" Decade, to be used as a guide for local groups on how to raise awareness on water issues. It will be progressively updated in cooperation with other UN-Water members and partners throughout the Decade to provide advocacy support on diverse themes.

65. A DVD was produced by the Department of Public Information and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs containing the message of the Secretary-General for the Decade; an eight-minute video, *Water: the Drop of Life*; a children's video, *Splish and Splash*; and the promotional booklet for the Decade.

66. Occurring almost simultaneously with the "Water for Life" Decade in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014. The synergy of these two initiatives provides a useful framework for strengthening and promoting education programmes and training projects to increase awareness and preparedness within schools, families and communities on water- and sanitation-related issues.

67. UNICEF has developed interactive learning resources for young people on water, environment and sanitation. These include a computer game of strategy and survival, entitled Water Alert!, which includes a facilitator's guide and instructions for use in developing countries, and a user-friendly text module with an online discussion board. These resources, in English, French and Spanish, are available online and on CD at UNICEF Voices of Youth (www.unicef.org/voy).

68. The second edition of the *World Water Development Report*, prepared by the UN-Water World Water Assessment Programme, will be issued in March 2006, as a major focus of the Decade's public information activities, and will be issued every three years throughout the Decade. The *African Water Development Report* is a regional report similar to the *World Water Development Report*. Subsidiary reports at the subregional and national levels have also been developed as stand-alone products for providing up-to-date information and monitoring tools.

69. The UNICEF-WHO Joint Monitoring Programme plans to issue its 2006 report with 2004 coverage estimates as a baseline for the Decade, followed by further reports to assess progress throughout the Decade, tentatively in 2008, 2012 and 2015 or 2016.

70. The proceedings and framework for action resulting from a round table on water, sanitation and hygiene education for schools, held in Oxford, England, in January 2005, set out actions that must be taken to ensure that by 2015 — the end of the "Water for Life" Decade — all schools receive a basic quality package of water, sanitation and hygiene education. The programme was sponsored by UNICEF and the International Water and Sanitation Centre, with the support of Oxfam GB and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

71. UNEP has a wide range of information products available which are relevant to the observance of the "Water for Life" Decade, including the *Atlas of International Freshwater Agreements*, *Vital Water Graphics* and a diverse portfolio on coral reefs. Some relevant websites include www.unep.org, www.gpa.unep.org, http://www.unep.org/dewa/water and www.unep.org/regionalseas.

VIII. Partnership initiatives

A. Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council

72. The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) is a multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to enhancing collaboration in the water-supply

and sanitation sector; it works in close cooperation with the United Nations system, including WHO, UNICEF, UN-Habitat, UNEP and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (see www.wsscc.org). The Council's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for all (WASH) Programme was recognized by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its thirteenth session as an existing initiative that should be supported for countries in their pursuit of the international development goals on water and sanitation. The WASH partnership, which involves national and regional activities in over 35 developing countries, aims to establish national WASH coalitions and mobilize political support and action around the world on the importance of sanitation, hygiene and water in achieving these goals and in reducing poverty during the "Water for Life" Decade. Among the Council's Decade-related initiatives are:

(a) *The Global WASH Forum*. Held in Dakar in December 2004, the Forum had as one of its main outcomes the Dakar Roadmap for achieving the Millennium Development Goals on water and sanitation, which is included in the matrix of policy options as part of the outcome of the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development;

(b) *The African Ministers' Initiative on WASH*. The Initiative will support increased national action in the fields of water, sanitation and hygiene through advocacy, coalition-building and South-South collaboration;

(c) *Women Leaders for WASH*. Convened during the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development by key women ministers from Norway and Uganda, the initiative includes women leaders in politics, culture, media, civil society, the United Nations and other fields to draw attention to the important role of women as decision makers in sanitation, hygiene and water programmes;

(d) *Television documentaries*. WSSCC is involved in co-producing documentaries on water and sanitation themes with the Television Trust for the Environment for the BBC *Earth Report* series.

B. Global Water Partnership

73. The Global Water Partnership (GWP) is a working partnership among all those involved in water management: government agencies, private companies, professional organizations, multilateral development agencies and others committed to meeting international goals related to water and sanitation. This network supports the idea that the goals of the "Water for Life" Decade can be reached only if there is collective awareness-raising on the key role of water in achieving sustainable development. The particular contribution that GWP can make to the Decade is to work within countries, and with the community of international organizations, to assist countries in developing integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, as set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

74. To assist in this effort, GWP, together with the Netherlands Water Partnership, has developed the GWP Toolbox on Integrated Water Resources Management to provide water-management professionals clear examples of good and bad practices and lessons learned from real-life implementation experiences. The Toolbox offers a compendium of over 50 policies and actions, or tools, for putting integrated water resources management into practice, and each tool is illustrated by real cases, giving

examples of how a tool has worked in a given combination and context. The Toolbox provides a range of tools which users can select or modify according to their needs and local circumstances.

C. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

75. The Ramsar Convention has been highly supportive of the "Water for Life" Decade. On the occasion of World Wetlands Day (2 February 2005), the Ramsar secretariat invited representatives of the main environmental and aid agencies in Geneva to a debate on the theme "Natural mitigation of natural disasters". The main focus of the event was the Indian Ocean tsunami, but the debate also covered broader issues, including many related to the "Water for Life" Decade.

76. The ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention will be held in November 2005 in Kampala. The theme for 2005 is "Wetlands and water, supporting life, sustaining livelihoods". The issue of poverty alleviation will also be the theme of World Wetlands Day 2006, on which occasion the messages of the Decade will be further promoted.

D. Gender and Water Alliance

77. The Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), a network of over 300 organizations and individuals around the world, offers a mix of information- and knowledge-sharing initiatives, such as electronic conferencing, a website, advocacy leaflets and videos, and capacity-building and pilot programmes (see www.genderandwater.org). For the "Water for Life" Decade, GWA is working with partners such as UNDP, UN-Habitat and Cap-Net to develop gender strategies in the water sector and to provide training and materials to water managers on the importance of involving both women and men in the sustainable management of water and sanitation. GWA will showcase these materials at the Fourth World Water Forum, in Mexico in March 2006, and at other events. GWA also cooperated with UN-Water/Africa in organizing a seminar on gender and water resources management in Africa, in Pretoria in March 2005, where an action plan on gender and water resources management was drawn up. The plan was endorsed by the African Minister Council on Water and will be implemented with all major stakeholders, including the African Water Facility hosted by the African Development Bank.

E. Fourth World Water Forum, Mexico 2006

78. The World Water Forum and Ministerial Conference are initiatives of the World Water Council and host Governments, aimed at raising awareness and promoting active stakeholder discussions on water issues all over the world. As a major international event on water, the Forum seeks to enable multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue to influence water policymaking at the global and national levels, to improve living standards for people all over the world and to promote more responsible water resources use and management in line with the pursuit of sustainable development. The Fourth World Water Forum, to be held in Mexico City in March 2006, will focus on good practices and concrete field actions

in five key themes under the conference slogan, "Local actions for global challenges".

79. In cooperation with the Fourth World Water Forum and the Japan Water Forum, UNICEF is planning to organize the second Children's World Water Forum as a parallel event. The focus of the proposed event is to highlight intergenerational cooperation, strengthening dialogue between policymakers and the children of the world.

F. International Water Management Institute

80. The International Water Management Institute (IWMI), based in Sri Lanka, implements research studies focusing on analysis of the trade-offs between water development, water management and the environment. Its new thematic structure covers water basin management; land, water and livelihoods; agriculture, water and cities; and water management and environment. The current emphasis of IWMI research projects is on identifying the linkages between irrigation and poverty; scientifically documenting the relationship between irrigation water management and the environment, especially regarding wetlands; and examining existing smallholder and/or community experiences in rehabilitating degraded agro-ecosystems and the opportunities for replication.

81. IWMI contributed to the Copenhagen Consensus project by submitting proposals highlighting the lack of access to safe and affordable domestic water supply and sanitation and water for productive purposes for the rural poor. The three investment proposals presented were ranked among the best, likely to be highly cost-effective (see http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/).

82. IWMI and Development Cooperation Ireland have produced a "Water for Life" calendar for 2005. It highlights IWMI work with poor rural communities in Africa and Asia to improve livelihoods and food production and Development Cooperation efforts to bring drinking water and better health and sanitation to poor communities in Africa and South-East Asia.

G. Other important partnership activities

83. The members of the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH), a scientific and educational NGO, are active in promoting the theme "water for life" in their professional roles as regulators, academics and researchers on groundwater. Its members also act as advisers to United Nations agencies, Governments and other NGOs. IAH works to improve the science, policy and information base for groundwater planning by fostering cooperation and information-exchange among professionals, supporting reliable and long-term data sets. IAH will devote significant resources to Africa during the period 2005-2015, recognizing that technically sound groundwater management will be critical in the types of basins and aquifers that exist in Africa. More information on IAH is available at its website (www.iah.org).

84. The Northern Water Network was launched at the Third World Water Forum in an effort to build a network among the water community in industrialized countries to exchange experiences, technologies and know-how.

85. A large number of non-governmental organizations, as well as research institutes and other entities dealing with water issues, have indicated interest in preparing and organizing activities related to the International "Water for Life" Decade and using its logo. It is expected that a strong network of interested parties will be established for the purpose of engaging in the activities related to the Decade.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

86. The outcomes achieved at the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development provide a useful framework for action to raise public awareness and to meet the internationally agreed development goals on water and sanitation during the "Water for Life" Decade. As financial contributions and commitments to advance the goals of the Decade have been limited so far, fund-raising appeals will be needed, aimed at all stakeholders, such as Governments, non-governmental organizations and private foundations.

87. **Member States may wish to consider setting up national committees or designating focal points in their respective countries to facilitate and promote activities related to the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015.**

88. **Special focus needs to be placed on Africa's water development and management, and on gender, water and sanitation initiatives, if the goals of the Water for Life Decade are to be achieved in that region.**

89. **UN-Water will continue to facilitate the coordinated system-wide response necessary for the implementation of activities in support of the "Water for Life" Decade, giving equal consideration to water and sanitation.**

90. **Member States, national and international organizations, major groups and the private sector are urged to make voluntary contributions in accordance with the guidelines for international years and anniversaries.**

91. **Interested stakeholders, such as international and regional organizations, non-governmental groups and others, are encouraged to link their water-related activities to the "Water for Life" Decade and may wish to consider new partnerships.**

92. **Links with related initiatives undertaken by all stakeholders as well as major international events planned during the Decade should be strongly encouraged so that the Decade will involve all stakeholders in and outside of the United Nations system.**

Notes

[1] The scope of UN-Water's work encompasses all aspects of freshwater, including surface and groundwater resources and the interface between freshwater and seawater. It includes freshwater resources, in terms of both quality and quantity, their development, assessment, management, monitoring and use (including, for example, domestic uses, agriculture and ecosystem requirements). The scope of work of UN-Water also includes sanitation, encompassing both access to and use of sanitation by populations and the interactions between sanitation and freshwater. It further includes water-related disasters, emergencies and other extreme events and their impact on human security.